DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 186 824 CG 014 420

AUTHOR Gillis, Candida; Wagner, Linda
TITLE Life-Writing: Writing Workshops and Outreach Procedures.
INSTITUTION Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Dept. of English.
SPONS AGENCY Michigan Council for the Arts, Detroit.; Michigan Council for the Humanities, East Lansing.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Boston, MA, April 7-11, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Day Care; Autobiographies; *Creativity; *Educational Gerontology; Humanistic Education; *Older Adults; Personal Care Homes; Program Descriptions; Self Concept; *Self Expression; Workshops; *Writing (Composition)

ABSTRACT

The ongoing project described in this paper seeks to develop an economical, effective means through which communities can establish writing workshops that will provide the aged with constructive environments for life review. It is aimed at identifying the methods and materials useful in a workshop setting for stimulating reminiscence and personal history, culminating in oral/written compositions. Procedures include the establishment of ongoing writing workshops in senior residential centers, the collection of writing produced by the aged, the development of guidelines and materials for conducting workshops, and the production of a training film. A summary of tentative conclusions drawn from the first phase of the project is followed by a discussion of the significance of Life-Writing Workshops. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED186824

Conference noted on release form. C.K. Jaslow

LIFE-WRITING: WRITING WORKSHOPS AND OUTREACH PROCEDURES

A Model Project of Workshops for the Aged funded by grants from the Michigan Councils for the Humanities and Arts

Dr. Candida Gillis
Dr. Linda Wagner

Department of English
Michigan State University

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Candida Gillis

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CG 014420

Michigan State University is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer

"Life-Writing: Writing Workshops and Outreach Procedures," A Model Project of Workshops for the Confined Aged*

DR. CANDIDA GILLIS And DR. LINDA WAGNER, Michigan State University

The ongoing project described in this paper is aimed at developing an economical, effective means for communities to establish writing workshops that will provide the aged with constructive environments for life review. It is aimed at identifying the methods and materials useful in a workshop setting for stimulating reminiscence and personal history, culminating in oral/written compositions. Procedures include the establishment of ongoing writing workshops in seniors' residential centers, the collection of writing produced by the aged, the development of guidelines and materials for conducting workshops, and the production of a training-documentary film.

*Sponsored by grants to the Michigan State University Department of English from the Michigan Council for the Humanities and the Michigan Council for the Arts.

AIMS OF THE PROJECT

Old people are a neglected minority in the United States. They are given few opportunities to participate in or contribute directly to the enrichment of our culture. Alienation from society at large and a cultural devaluing of aging are factors contributing to a decreased sense of self-worth in elderly people. This decreased self-worth may in itself be enormously debilitating, and, coupled with physical handicaps associated with aging, may interfere with old people's abilities to lead creative and mentally healthy lives. Depression, and feelings of one's society are characteristics of aging that can prevent the elderly from taking an interest in the new, and in the world outside one's self. Recognizing the value of one's past is requisite to the confidence that precedes creativity and learning.

Faced with the reality that many senior citizens feel isolated from the real world and may have a diminished sense of their own value, the Department of English at Michigan State University is conducting a program of writing workshops designed to help old people value their reminiscences and feelings through the medium of composition.

The project, Life Writing II: Writing Workshops and Outreach Procedures, is made possible by grants from the Michigan Council for the Humanities, and the Michigan Council for the Arts, and extends through the Winter of 1981.[1]

It's aim is to develop economical and effective methods for communities to establish writing workshops that will provide the elderly with constructive environments for life review, a phenomenon of aging characterized by reminiscences, and described by R.N. Butler as healthy and functional.[2] By conducting writing workshops in seniors' residential and day-time care centers, the Project staff is attempting to identify the methods and materials that will be useful in a workshop setting to stimulate reminiscence and sharing of personal history and experiences, culminating in oral and/or written compositions--narrative, stories, poetry, so that communities throughout the country may establish workshops of their own. The goals of the Project are as follows:

1) to provide a means by which elderly people can re-establish self-worth and a sense of community and purpose necessary for psychological well-being;

2) to provide meaningful stimulation for elderly people's creativity;

3) to contribute to our culture's literature and history;

4) to provide valuable information about the interests, needs, and abilities of elderly people that can be useful in combating ageism:

---

[1]For more information contact the Michigan Council for the Humanities, Nisbet Building, Suite 30, 1407 S. Harrison Rd., E. Lansing, Michigan 48824, or Michigan Council for the Arts, 1200 Sixth Ave., Detroit, Michigan 48826.

[2]"The Life-Review: an Interpretation of Reminiscence in the Aged," Psychiatry, 26, #1 (February, 1963).

5) to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the process of composing;

6) to stimulate dialogue between humanists and community groups about the role of the humanities in the lives of older Americans.

In order to accomplish these goals, the Project has established the following more specific objectives:

1. To identify and define strategies for the institution and maintenance of writing workshops for senior citizens in a variety of community environments, and to publish these strategies.

   By organizing and staffing a series of ongoing writing workshops, we are seeking answers to the following questions:

   a. What kinds of attitudes, knowledge, and teaching skills are necessary to elicit congenial talk, reminiscence, friendliness, and interest among members of the workshop groups?
   b. What kinds of approaches or activities are most effective in stimulating writing, and how might these vary for senior citizens of poor physical health, for those in different environmental settings (day care, residential centers, nursing homes)?
   c. What techniques can group leaders use to help elderly writers learn and practice a variety of forms, audiences, and purposes for writing?
   d. What ratio of leader to group members will be most economical yet beneficial in stimulating writing and congenial discussion?
   e. What equipment, such as tape recorders and typewriters, is necessary?
   f. How can elderly writers publish their writing, either locally or nationally?

2. To collect, through the workshops, a variety of literature--stories, autobiography, poetry--written by senior citizens and to publish the writing in a form suitable for use with other seniors.

3. To collect recorded oral history of the Lansing area.

4. To produce a documentary teaching film on the project for distribution to community centers, schools, and senior citizens' centers, and to accompany that film with a panel presentation by humanists discussing the role of the humanities in the lives of older Americans.

THE STATE OF THE ART

Research and literature on the effects of writing workshops for the elderly is extremely limited, as a search of ERIC, Medline, Psychological Abstracts, and other sources revealed. Three studies available to us indicate that writing (or the oral composing of writing) is an activity that the aged can and do enjoy. Kenneth Koch's work teaching poetry to older people illustrates that senior citizens can enjoy composing poetry and are capable of producing poetry that is highly creative. After conducting a series of poetry writing workshops,--in a format which included poetry readings, talks by Koch about the nature of poetry, and individual and group poetry writing (much of it done orally and transcribed)--Koch found that his "students" in the American Nursing Home not only enjoyed writing poetry but also were capable of learning to write in a variety of poetic forms.[1] In an earlier study, (1973), Edith Shapiro found that when properly motivated, institutionalized elderly people were productive in a group creative writing project.[2] And finally, Frances Anderson's assessment of older people's interests in the arts and humanities found that one-fourth to one-third of senior residents sampled in nursing homes and shelter care centers listed letter writing as a "preferred topic" of interest. "Writing Stories/Poems" was a "preferred" activity for 10 percent of nursing home residents and 32 percent of residents in sheltered care facilities.

Research and literature on creativity and aging, on reminiscence and mental health, and on the composing process itself do indicate that workshops which stress writing about one's past life experiences could have psychologically beneficial effects. Research on creativity and aging is relatively recent and limited in scope. The assumption that creativity declines with chronological age was challenged by R.N. Butler in his 1967 study of creative people. ("The Destiny of Creativity in Later Life: Studies of Creative People and the Creative Process.")[4] Extensive interviews with people whose life work included creative contributions to history and the arts led Butler to conclude that creative impulses and abilities do not necessarily diminish with age. Decline in creativity, Butler felt, is more likely attributable to the debilitations that accompany aging rather than to the age factor itself. An earlier study by Brozek, "The Age Problem in Research Workers: Psychological Viewpoint" (1951),[5] cited by Butler, supports his conclusions. Brozek found that elderly people's vocabularies and capacities for using language increased when they were exercised. Butler and Lewis, in Aging and Mental Health: Positive Psychosocial Approaches (1973), maintained that elderly people retain their capacities for creativity until late in life, and that with encouragement, the elderly can change.[6]

---

[1]Koch, Kenneth. I Never Told Anybody, (New York: Random House, 1977).

[2]Shapiro, Edith. "The Residents: A Study in Motivation and Productivity Among Institutionalized Octogenarians," Gerontologist, 13. No. 1 (Spring, 1973).

[3]Anderson, Frances E. "The Arts and the Elderly: An Assessment of Interest and Attitudes, "Studies in Art Education, 18, No. 1.

[4]Levin and Kahana, Psychodynamic Studies on Aging (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1967).

[5]Scientific Monthly, #78.

[6](St. Louis: The C.V. Mosby Company, 1973).

The studies on creativity and aging are additionally supported by the evidence provided by the biographies of known writers. William Carlos Williams, William Butler Yeats, Jorge Luis Borges, and many other great literary artists produced some of their best work during their later years. Their creativity was enhanced, not hindered, by aging.

Studies on the relationship between aging and intellectual or cognitive functioning do not appear to support the view that "serious intellectual decrement in the aged" occurs (Shaie, 1974): although, as Horn and Donaldson cautioned, there is a tendency to draw "wishful" conclusions about the research.[7] Baltes and Schaie's research indicated that "On at least some dimensions of intelligence, particularly the crystallized type, people of average health can expect to maintain or even increase their level of performance into old age."[8] Oyer and Oyer (1976), in reviewing the literature on aging and communication, concluded similarly that while the aged generally show a decline in ability to perform tasks requiring abstract intelligence, their age has less effect on their ability to perform tasks that "reflect accumulated experience, such as vocabulary."[9] Oyer and Oyer attributed observed reductions in intellectual functioning to "deteriorative changes in the central nervous system," a decrease in motivation to perform, and lack of practice. Their conclusions support those of Butler.

Life review, as identified and described by Butler, is a natural, functional phenomenon of aging that precedes the reorganization of personality. In "The Life Review: An Interpretation of Reminiscence in the Aged," Butler pointed out that reminiscence, an aspect of life review involving the reconsideration and re-evaluation of past experience, may be creative in nature and healthful in outcome: "The recovery of memories. . . . is generally regarded as one of the basic ingredients of the curative process." Whereas people tend, generally, to view reminiscence as dysfunctional, Butler found that reminiscence and life review could bring about positive changes, such as renewed self-worth, new friendships and intimacies, and an increased identification with one's community.[10]

Butler's conclusions are supported by the finding of William Boylin (1976), in a study examining ego adjustment and reminiscence. By administering a questionnaire and ego adjustment scales to institutionalized veterans, Boylin tested Erikson's theory that reminiscence is a funcional part of satisfactory adjustment in old age. Boylin found that the people who reminiscence most often achieved significantly higher scores on the measure of ego integrity.[11]

Conclusions about the function and nature of the composing process, although drawn from studies of children and adolescents, indicate that the activity of writing could constructively draw on and support elderly peoples'

---

[7]John Horn and Gary Donaldson. "On the Myth of Intellectual Decline in Adulthood." American Psychologist, October, 1976.

[8]Cited in Baltes, Paul B. and Schaie, K. Warner. "On the Plasticity of Intelligence in Adulthood and Old Age," American Psychologist, October, 19.

[9]Oyer, Herbert J. and Oyer, E. Jane. Aging and Communication, (Baltimore: University Park Press, 1976).

[10]Psychiatry, 26, #1 (February, 1963).

[11]William Boylin et al., "Reminiscing and Ego Integrity in Institutionalized Elderly Males," Gerontologist, 16, #2, (April, 1976).

life review. Many scholars and critics of writing hold the view that writing is a process that enables the writer to explore and shape his experience, and that one's writing reflects one's psychological orientation and development. The body of psychological literary criticism, for example, is founded on this premise, as is the work of James Britton and David Holbrook, educators who studied the process of writing with children.

In Children's Writing (1967), David Holbrook suggested that through the fictionalization or narration of experiences, writers are able to symbolize problems and concerns that they are not able to articulate consciously. He stated, "When anyone is really working on his inner world, he becomes excited--for he is making important discoveries and gains, as between his ego and the witches, princes, and threatening shadows within. He sees connections and relationships, and possibilities of structures, patterns, richness of content: and in these, joy, and beauty."[12] James Britton, in "Talking and Writing," went further in supporting Holbrook's view that the process of writing is a process of tapping the unconscious and giving structure to experience. Writing itself, according to Britton--the actual process of sitting down with pen and paper to record experience--stimulates new perceptions of that experience. A piece of writing, he concluded, is not simply evidence that the writer has perceived the shape of an experience. It is, rather, the record of an act of perception. ". . . . the writing itself constitutes the act of perceiving it (experience)." And, the record of the perception, the writing itself, becomes available to the writer as new information about himself.[13]

The field of psychology recognizes the value of journal writing, including the recording of memories, as a means to self awareness and the maintenance of mental health. Psychologist Ira Progoff (1975), asserted that journal writing is a technique that can assist people of any age in becoming aware of their own inner strengths, and recommended such writing as a tool for psychological self-care.[14]

That writing can help people grow socially as well as psychologically has long been the premise of programs in writing instruction. It is a premise supported by the experiences of teachers of language arts, and held by the National Council of Teachers of English. Stephen N. Judy, in Explorations in the Teaching of Secondary English, defined the highest goal of language arts instruction to be participation "in the community of language."[15] James E. Miller, in Word, Self, Reality, stressed the value of writing in helping people to identify and clarify their unconscious attitudes and to feel less isolated by recognizing that others have similar attitudes.[16] Sidney Simon's writing program, Composition for Personal Growth, encourage writers to perceive and shape their private feelings and thoughts, and to feel comfortable sharing their explorations with others.[17]

---

[12](New York: The Cambridge University Press).

[13]In Eldonna Everts, ed., Explorations in Children's Writing, (Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1970).

[14]Ira Progoff, At A Journal Workshop: The Basic Text and Guide for Using the Intensive Journal, (New York: Dialogue House Library, 1975).

[15](New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1974).

[16](New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1972).

[17](New York: Hart Publishing Co., Inc., 1973).

Writing, then, is a recognized means and medium for self-exploration, for the defining of experience, and for developing one's sense of membership in the human community. Teachers and educators attest to its effectiveness in helping young people develop psychologically, socially, and as writers. Psychologists recognize its value in the process of therapy. Yet its potential value for elderly adults has not been examined.

Research on writing has given us information about the needs, interests, and writing habits of young people, and none at all about those of the elderly. Research has not asked questions such as the following of elderly writers: What common interests and concerns are expressed in their writing? What forms of writing, if any, do the elderly prefer? Given choices of audience and subject, which will elderly writers select? How might this choice affect style, tone, or voice? Because these questions have not been asked, our knowledge of the nature and function of writing is incomplete, as is our knowledge about elderly people generally.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

Life-Writing II: Writing Workshops and Outreach Procedures grew from a highly successful 1977-78 project, Life-Writing for Life-Living, Autobiography for Senior Citizens, administered by the MSU Department of English with grants from Michigan State University and the Michigan Council for the Arts. In this pilot project, faculty and graduate students in the Department of English met with seniors in residential centers and day-time care centers once a week, for a combination (initially) of reading and discussing short examples of life-writing (essays, chapters of autobiography). At later sessions, participants shared their own recollections orally, and in writing, with other members of their group. Individual writing of poetry and autobiography was encouraged. Selections of participant's stories, poetry and recollections taped and transcribed, were included in the Life-Writing Project publication, The Life-Writing Review, distributed to all participants in the residential and day-time care centers. Group writing projects were encouraged; some groups "published," using Project funds, their own "Memory Books." Books of poetry, recollections of Michigan/Midwest history, cookbooks, and more were among the projects planned by specific groups. The Project emphasized a continuing relation between the group leader and the "students," and stressed attention to the individual writing/storytelling/composing interests of the group members.

Life-Writing I was highly successful. The newsletter was an effective stimulus to writing, and helped increase friendliness and participation. Group leaders reported an increased feeling of solidarity in the groups, and an increased interest on the part of individuals in getting to know each other better and in getting to know people in other groups and in other locations. Additionally, leaders and observers identified and increased interest in reminiscence, in storytelling, and in listening to and reading others' compositions. Evidence of an increase in the attention span and memory of some participants was also noted.

DESIGN

Life-Writing II continues the work of Life-Writing I with some additional features.

Writing Workshops

A series of writing workshops have been instituted in senior citizens' centers in the Lansing area. The Lansing area has a number of such centers, each drawing on a slightly different population and with different environments. Centers include a publicly operated residential center, a day-care center, and a drop-in center. Each workshop consists of no more than 10 participants, and is led by a graduate student working on the project staff. Participating graduate students were selected according to their interest and experience in working with the elderly, their knowledge of and interest in the teaching of writing, and their general teaching abilities. At each session, the group leader reads selected life-writing--autobiography, sketches, stories, poems--composed by well-known writers or by other workshop participants, and follows the reading by encouraging discussion, storytelling, (reminiscence), or the composing of a group poem. He or she tape records each session, and portions of the tape are transcribed by a staff member for use in the following sessions, or for possible inclusion in the project newsletter.

Subjects of the readings and storytelling are sometimes more public--going to school, a first automobile trip--and sometimes more private--a favorite gift, memories of family. The group leaders give support, encouragement, and a minimum of direction. As the groups become well acquainted, they become more self-directed, deciding on discussion topics and topics for writing, and even initiating group writing projects (memory books, etc.).

Group poetry is a favorite activity. Using techniques suggested by Koch, Kaminsky,[1] and others, leaders provide thematic focus and a general structure, and each group member contributes one or two "lines" in the form of a short memory or idea. A typical topic for a group poem is "Springtime reminds me of ____."

The Newsletter

Poems, stories, and reminiscence are recorded by the leader by hand or on tape. Following the session, the leader reviews the tape and chooses selections for the newsletter. These selections are then edited, either by the leader or by a staff editor. The project's editorial principle is to highlight the artfulness and richness of the piece while retaining the flavor and meaning. We do not alter original language or syntax unless absolutley necessary (for example, in cases where excessive repetition or confusing sequence of events obscures the meaning). Leaders/editors determine poetic lineation in group poems and will sometimes transcribe a particularly poetic reminiscence into poetic form. One aim of the project is to impress the "writers" with the interestingness and literary value of their own work.

The newsletter is published approximately once every two months. The newsletter is highly successful, both in stimulating writing and in enabling the writers to take pride in their work.

---

[1]Marc Kaminsky, What's Inside You It Shines Out of You (New York: Horizon Press, 1974).

Staff Meetings

At bi-weekly staff meetings, group leaders assess and plan activities that will encourage people to write, and to write in a variety of forms (poetry, narrative, dialogue, stories, etc.). While leaders should be flexible, of course, and encourage any writing their group or individual members of the group wish to do, they are prepared with specific activities, and have a repertoire of materials available. It is not intended that every group try the same activities, though this may occasionally happen.

To assist the group leaders in developing a repertoire of activities, the project makes available a number of books containing discussion on the nature and theory of writing as a means of personal growth through exploration, and suggestions for specific writing tasks. Books containing useful material include Miller and Judy, Words in Reality; Simon et al., Composition for Personal Growth; The Teachers and Writers Collaborative, Whole Word Catalogue 2; and Elbow, Writing Without Teachers. Although these books are designed for use with young people, they contain activities which can also be modified for use with mature writers. Additional ideas for writing are garnered from the staff of professional writers and critics who teach writing in the Michigan State University Department of English.

Also at the staff meetings, group leaders assess and define the kinds of attitudes, approaches, and discussion-leading skills necessary to running effective writing workshops. To assist the staff in this phase of evaluation, each group leader keeps a journal in which he or she records responses to each session, personal reactions and concerns, and notations on successes and failures. The journals not only provide records of each group's activities and the leader's responses to them, but also enable each leader to keep a record of his or her own growth and development. Additionally, selected workshop sessions are videotaped for playback and discussion at the staff meetings.

The Life-Writing staff also meets regularly with the staff and administrators of the centers where the workshops are in progress. In these meetings, the two staffs exchange ideas and information about the effects and success of the workshops.

From the workshops, staff meetings, journals, tapes and videotapes will come the material for a booklet of guidelines for running life-writing workshops--guidelines that will be available for distribution to communities interested in establishing the workshops.

Community Participation

During the Spring of 1980, MSU's involvement in the workshops will be phased out. Volunteers from the Lansing community, including staff and members of the seniors' centers and members of area civic organizations will take over the job of leading the workshops. The volunteers will, initially, be trained by our project staff; after an internship period of two months, they will have sole responsibility for the workshops.

Production of a Documentary Film

The Instrutional Media Center of MSU is currently making a short documentary film that will accompany the written guidelines. The film will include footage of the workshops in their initial stages and later stages, and footage of staff

meetings. Voice-over narrative will include workshop members telling stories and discussing writing, and readings of the writing by professional actors. Completion of the film is scheduled for the Fall of 1980.

Outreach Procedures

A major phase of this project is the dissemination of information throughout the State of Michigan. To this end, members of the project staff plan to travel to selected areas in the State to present a program on the project, including the film, the guidelines, and discussion by a panel of humanists.

Evaluation

Evaluation of the project is scheduled for the Fall of 1980, and will be conducted by the project staff and a team of evaluators from the Michigan Council for the Humanities.

RESULTS

Results of the project to date are incomplete. A sample of tentative conclusions drawn form the first phase of the project are summarized as follows:

1. The workshops members are initially reluctant to remember and share memories. A not uncommon early response to a leader's question was, "I don't remember anything." As the workshops progressed, this attitude diminished considerably.

2. It was advantageous for leaders to learn as much as they could about the participants as quickly as possible in order to successfully elicit responses by cueing.

3. Concrete topics were more effective in stimulating reminiscence and writing than abstract or general. "My grandfather" evoked more response then "Being Happy."

4. Because short-term memory is often weaker than long-term, workshop sessions that were "self-contained" worked better than those that required remembering events from a week before.

5. Some participants became more attentive to each other and more able to focus on the subject at hand as the workshops progressed. It was not uncommon at early workshops for people to use a leader's question as an occassion to talk on any subject, regardless of it's pertinence.

6. Seeing one's words in print had a positive effect on a person's interest in talking and writing. "Classroom publication" seems as effective for the old as for the young.

7. Workshop groups tended to become more self-directed over time.

8. Participants began to express more interest in writing outside the workshops—letters to family, friends, memoirs, poetry.

9. As the workshops progressed, people began to express an interest in expanding the workshops to include discussion of and writing about current events and issues.

10. The newsletter evoked a spirit of competition in some people. "We have a lot more in this issue than they do!" was a characteristic comment, comparing the contributions of one workshop to those of a workshop at a different center.

11. Some participants expressed interest in meeting participants in other workshops at different centers. One person even began corresponding with a newsletter contributor from a different center.

These results and more will be described in greater detail in the guidelines. More information will be available in 1981 from the Michigan Council for the Humanities and the Michigan Council for the Arts.

SIGNIFICANCE

The primary benefits of Life-Writing are those of enabling people to chart their development, the interesting events in their lives, and to write about selected events with some degree of skill and care. The benefits would appear to be obvious in both psychological health and in regaining or developing writing skills and skills of memory perhaps infrequently used.

The Life-Writing Project serves one of the most disadvantaged areas of our culture, in giving time and interest to people who often feel inconsequential at this stage of their lives. The project will result in an economical means for communities to support their elderly residents by providing them with environments in which they can reminisce, review their life experiences, and share these experiences for useful, creative purposes. Through presentations by a panel of humanists, published writing, and film, the project can disseminate information about and by the elderly to the public, and help to make the public more aware of elderly people's needs, interests, and activities. The project increases communication between the elderly and others in their communities and among elderly people as well.

In a myriad of ways, Life-Writing for Life-Living seems to be a humanistic project. Almost without conscious planning, it investigates history and culture: and is a rich source of oral history. It is aimed to evoke, analyze and recapture the human experience; and to present the results of that process in the enduring forms of imaginative art--poetry, fiction, and autobiography. It epitomizes the process of recognizing the value of the single human spirit, and giving some kind of permanence to that spirit.